Phasing out of mercury

481. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether studies by WHO and global environmental agencies have established the neuro-toxic effects of Mercury which hampers nerve conditions and causes renal failure;

(b) while the Western countries are phasing out use of Mercury for its adverse effects, whether, India's imports of Mercury have more than doubled in six years since 1996-97;

(c) whether even Parad Shivlings, traded and installed at homes for worship, has 30 percent Mercury by weight as its key constituent; and

(d) whether Government would consider to put in a regulatory structure for phasing out the use of Mercury of which India is the largest importer in the world?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A decreasing trend has been observed in the import of mercury in India since the year 2003-04.

(c) No Conclusive data on mercury content in Parad Shivlings are available.

(d) According to the Ministry of Commerce, mercury is freely importable and no proposal for changing the import policy for mercury is under consideration.

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau

482. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Wildlife Board has decided to set up a Wildlife Crime Cpntrol Bureau; and

(b) if so, the constitution and precise functions of the Bureau?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Bureau is envisaged as a multidisciplinary agency with full time officers from various organizations like State Police Forces, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Bureau of Invetigation, Intelligence Bureau, Indo Tibetan Border Police, Border Security Force, Customs, Forest and Wildlife Departments. The functions of the Bureau would be as follows:

i. Collect and collate intelligence related to organized wildlife crime activities and to disseminate the same to State and other Enforcement Agencies for swift action to apprehend the criminals and to bring them to justice.

ii. Vest the officers of the Bureau with powers to investigate and prosecute wildlife crimes having national and international ramifications.

iii. Develop infrastructure and capacity for scientific and professional investigation into wildlife crimes and assist State Governments to ensure greater success rate of prosecutions related to wildlife crimes.

iv. Implement the resolutions and decisions taken under various International Conventions such as Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), International Whaling Commission (IWC), etc., to which India is a Party.

v. Liaise and co-operate with the Interpol Wildlife Crime Working Group, the World Customs Organization, the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force and various other Law Enforcement Agencies inside the country.

vi. Evolve a National Policy for containing the illegal trade and capacity building of the State and Central enforcement agencies for this purpose.

vii. Monitor the trade and advise the Government of India on changes required in policy and legislation from time to time.